A NOTE ON THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME "DARBHANGA"

By

Kumar Ganganand Sinha, M.A.,M.L.C.

Today Darbhanga is one of the districts of Bihar; and its headquarter is located in the town known by that name. Until 1875, it was a part of the Tirhut District as then constituted.

The purpose of this note is to investigate as to how the name was given to that particular place.

In the *Gazetteer* of the Darbhanga district[1] some light has been thrown on it. It is stated :

"It takes its name from its chief town; and local patriotism insists that Darbhanga is derived from *Dura-Banga* (*Dvāra-Banga ?*) or Dar-i-Bangal meaning the door of Bengal. This derivation appears, however, to be philologically impossible and also historically incorrect, as the division between Bengal and Bihar has always been much further to the east. It seems more probable that the name is derived from that of the traditional founder of the town, one Darbhangi Khan, a Muhammadan freebooter, of whom little or nothing is known......".

Who was this Darbhangi Khan, the traditional founder of the town ? When was it founded ? We have no material to conclusively asscertain these, so far. The earliest reference to this name is found in a work, *Bhṛngadūta*, by Paṇḍita Gangānanda Jhā, a maithila Sanskrit Writer of the 17th Century A. D. (1615-1684). Even Vidyāpati mentions Sakurī[2] (modern Sakri about 12 miles from Darbhanga) but not Darbhanga. The *Bhṛngadūta* reference is as follows :

[तस्याः पाथः परमविमलं सन्निपीयाभिरामा–
गारां कामायुध दरभगा राजधानीमुपेयाः ।
भ्रातर्यस्याः सुरपतिपुरी मूर्द्ध्वमध्यासितानां
सौधश्रेणी हसति ध्वलज्योतिषां कैतवेन ॥५५॥]

---

(1) Bengal district Gazetters (Darbhanga) Vol. VI. p. 1.

(२) सक्कुरीपुर सरोवर कर्त्ता हेमहस्तिरथदानविदग्धः ।
भाति यस्य जनको रणजेतादेव सिंहनृपतिर्गुणराशिः ॥

........पुरुष-परीक्षा (चन्द्र कवि-कृत अनुवाद-संहिता)
प्रथम....राजप्रेस, दरभंगा, पृ० २५१ ।

tasyāh pāthah paramavimalaṁ sannipīyābhirāmā
gārāṁ kāmāyudha 'Darbhaga' rajadhani mupeyah
bhrātaryasyāh surapatipurī mūrdhva madhyāsitānāṁ
saudhaśreṇī hasati dhavalajyotiṣāṁ kaitavena. (55)[3]

This work is on the lines of the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa. The author sends his message from a far distant place to his wife at home in village Sarisab through a Bhṛnga (a large black bee) and indicates the route that it is to follow. In that route the Bhṛnga is to reach the bank of the river Bagmati and "*Tasyāh*" in the *sloka* refers to that river. He advises it to drink the pure water of the Bagmati, and proceed to the Capital City of Darbhanga which abounds with beautiful palaces and looks like the weapon of Kāmadeva[4]. He says that the row of palaces with bright lights on the top were as they were deriding the heaven itself.

The town of Darbhanga is on the bank of the Bagmati even to-day; and the mere fact that the poet mentions 'Darbhaga' and not 'Darbhanga' need not ordinarily lead us to doubt the identity. Conside-ration of metre might be responsible for the variation of name in the *sloka*.

The verse shows that in the 17th Century it was a very rich town full of palaces bedecked with flowers and light. It indicates its prospe-rous condition during these days.

The town in that flourishing condition must have been established before the author composed the poem. Probably *Bhṛngadūta* was written when the Sarcar-i-Tirhut was in the hands of Sundara Ṭhākura of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty under Mughal suzerainty. This presumption is based on the fact that although Paṇḍit Gangānanda Jha's life covers the period in which Puruṣottama Ṭhākura, Sundara Ṭhākura and Mahinātha Ṭhākura ruled over Sarcar-i-Tirhut, he was in the prime of youth during Sundara Ṭhākura's time. We do not know the exact date of the composi-tion of *Bhṛngadūta*.

The seat of these chiefs of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty at that time was not Darbhanga but Bhour. A resident officer of the Sovereign was however always stationed at Darbhanga and the Khaṇḍavalā Chiefs main-tained close relationship with him. They had their own camps near about the Darbhanga town as its present muhallas, Maheśapattī, Subhaṅkara-

(3) Mithila Tatva Vimarsha (Uttrardha) p. 62

(4) Weapons of Kamadeva....

अरविन्द मशोकञ्च चूतञ्च न मल्लिका ।
नीलोत्पलञ्च पञ्चैते पञ्चवाणस्थ सायका: ।। अमरकोष: ॥

pura, Puruṣottamapur, Sundarapura etc. indicate. Therefore, the city must have been built up under the patronage of Resident Subedar of Mohammedan sovereigns. The seat of Khaṇḍavalā Chief was permanently transferred to Darbhanga, later on, by Mahārāja Mādhava Siṁha of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty.

A plausible theory about the origin of the name "Darbhanga" appears to be that when Mahārāja Śivasiṁha of the Oinavāra dynasty fought a decisive battle with Sultan Ibrahim Shah in L.S. 297 (A. D. 1406 or 1414; whatever it may be. The historians differ in calculating the L.S.) near his capital Gajarathapura and his forces were completely defeated and crushed, the place was named Ḍalabhanga to commemorate the breaking up (bhanga) of Śiva Siṁha's force (dala). The word 'dala' become daḍa or 'dara' in common parlance and assumed the form 'Daḍabhanga' or 'Darbhanga' (ralayoḍalayosca sāmyaṁ).

It might be that the General of Ibrahim Shah's forces was nicknamed 'Darbhangi Khan' after the battle. Śhivadhārā, where the battle was fought, is only 2 miles from Gajarathapura (now called Sivasiṁhapura) and to the east of the river Bagmati. There is still a road right from Hajipur to Darbhanga via Muzaffarpur which goes up to Forbesganj in Purnea district. Probably, the forces of Ibrahim Shah was marching through that route to meet his adversary Śiva Siṁha at Śivasiṁhapura. The battle, as Dr. Upendra Thakur says in his *History of Mithila* (p. 318), "was horribly sanguinary resulting in the conversion of battle field into the gigantic heaps of heads of soldiers, horses, elephants etc. Śiva Siṁha stubbornly resisted but the fickle fate finally deserted him. His sudden collapse marked the end of a glorious era. The Kingdom of Gajarathapurà assumed a sad spectacls of desertion and gloom...".

The name "Kabrāghata", it is held, owes its origin to the fact that Muslim soldiers killed in the battle were buried there. The bodies of the Hindu soldiers who were killed possibly remained uncared for. In course of time they became heaps of bones and were later mixed up with earth. The place is taken to be the origin of the present day Harāhi. Both Kabrāghata and Harāhi are now muhallas of the Darbhanga town.

This theory I think deserves due consideration both from historical and geographical points of view.

———